

REMARKS

Claims 1-9 are all the claims pending in the application. Claims 10 and 11 have been newly added.

Applicants thank the Examiner for acknowledging Applicants' claim for foreign priority and receipt of the certified priority document. Applicants also thank the Examiner for indicating approval of the drawings.

Claims 1, 4-6, and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Schreier et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,742,779). The grounds of rejection state that Schreier et al. disclose a method for sucking (recited in claims 1 and 4), citing col. 2, lines 4-40 that includes cups (9), a source or vacuum pump (12), a controlling device (14), and a suction controlling sequence (citing col. 2, lines 4-40). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

The present invention relates to a sheet sucking/removing method that can be used in a printing device for removing only one sheet (printing plate) for processing from a plurality of stacked sheets. The stacked sheets are typically accommodated in cassettes, and removed from the cassettes by suction. However, application of too much suction during this removal of a stacked sheet from the cassette can cause problems such as lifting/sucking up more than one sheet at a time, or even deformation of the sheet (or plate) itself. To prevent such problems, the present invention, as recited in independent claims 1 and 5, includes features whereby differing negative pressures are applied to the suction device (suction cups) for the sucking/removing process and the conveying/supplying process. In particular, a first negative pressure is used by the sucking device, which is a minimum pressure needed in order to suck and remove only the

uppermost sheet, and a second negative pressure is used when conveying/supplying the sheet to, for example, the exposing section of the printing device.

Schreier et al. is also related to a sheet/document transport method using suction. However, the method used for sucking and transporting a sheet in the Schreier et al. device is different than that recited in independent claims 1 and 5. In the Schreier et al. device, only one suction pressure is disclosed for sucking a document (sheet) and transporting the document to a document support device 5. In the Schreier et al. device, to ensure that only one sheet is sucked/removed from holding magazine 6, a suction is applied to the sheet to be removed (in a first direction), while at the same time, the remaining stack of documents in the holding magazine 6 are subjected to a different suction (in a second direction) within the holding magazine itself (see col. 6, line 61- col. 2, line 14)¹. Thus, while the grounds of rejection cite the suction controlling sequence of Schreier et al. as anticipating the claims of the present application, as explained, this sequence (and structure) is quite different than that recited in independent claims 1 and 5.

Dependent claim 4 further defines the differing negative pressures associated with the suction device/cups of the present invention, and therefore is allowable for this reason as well. As discussed above, there is no disclosure that differing pressures for suction of the sheet are applied in Schreier et al. Therefore, claim 4 is allowable for this feature as well as its dependence on claim 1.

¹ This process is also particularly clear as recited in claim 1 of Schreier et al.

Applicants note that claims 2, 3, 7, and 8 include patentable features, as indicated in the Office Action. Applicants also submit that claims 6 and 9 are allowable at least based on their dependence on independent claim 5.

New claims 10 and 11

Applicants have amended the claims to more clearly define that suction cups are but one exemplary embodiment for the suction device. For example, one of ordinary skill in the art would understand that a board 8 such as used by Schreier et al. may be used. As such, the “suction cup” feature has been placed into new claims 10 and 11.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below. In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
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Respectfully submitted,



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